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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PM/DTCC - BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR KYLE M. BALLARD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KMOC](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: BLUE LANTERN POST-LICENSE PRE-SHIPMENT
END-USE CHECK, 050143296

REF: A. STATE 30527
[1](#)B. STATE 80

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In response to reftel, Emboffs conducted a background check of the Mazatenango owner of El Venadito, Zoraida Elizabeth Valenzuela Gomez, whose company was formerly connected to El Venadito of Coban through marriage, the same El Venadito which purchased large volumes of Marlin Model 60, .22 caliber rifles from the weapons store, Defensa. S.A. As stated in reftel, these three companies and owners involved have an active relationship in the buying and selling of Marlin rifles. According to Valenzuela and in a previous interview with Farid Massis of Defensa, S.A., these rifles are legally purchased and used by two types of individual buyers: hunters and farmers. The investigation included an interview with the company's owner, and records checks of both the company and the owner with the Guatemala's Arms and Munitions Control Department (DECAM). As of result of the investigation, Post recommends approval of reftel license. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On May 13, Emboffs conducted an interview with Valenzuela, whose company, El Venadito, is located in Calzada Centenario, Comercial Centenario, Local #3, Mazatenango, Guatemala. Valenzuela, accompanied by her husband, who is also a weapons store owner, Jorge Andrade, were professional and provided all proper documentation including a list of weapons sold over a five month period and pictures of the outside, inside, and weapons storage room of the store. As described in reftel, Emboffs asked for an explanation of the relationship between Valenzuela's company and another company by the same name located in Coban. Valenzuela is the former daughter-in-law to Otto Erick Ponce Morales, who owns El Venadito of Coban. (Note: The Coban El Venadito was cited in reftel B for purchasing large quantities of Marlin rifles, which Emboffs at the time suspected may have had ties to narcotrafficking activity. But further evidence indicated that El Venadito of Coban did not have ties to narcotraffickers. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) From a detailed review of recent photographs taken of the outside, inside and the weapons storage room, El Venadito (Mazatenango) is located on the bottom floor of a commercial retail center, and includes a secure storefront with visible signage, one large steel rolling door that protects the side entrance of the store, two sets of security bar doors inside the front entrance, and a security guard protecting the inside of the store. The retail area has one long weapons counter. In the back of the store is a weapons storage room. The weapons storage room itself is very secure with all of the necessary protective measures required including motion detectors in the walls and ceiling that are connected to a 24-hour alarm company. The weapons storage room is made of four solid cinder block walls with one reinforced steel-grated wall. And Valenzuela added that directly behind the weapons storage room is a commercial bank.

¶4. (SBU) As noted in reftel, Valenzuela is the authorized firearms retailer listed on the license application, and this is her first license to import U.S.-origin firearms. Valenzuela will be selling Marlin Model 60 Rifles, .22 caliber to hunters and farmers in the Mazatenango area and she plans to sell to weapons store owners in the future. Valenzuela has purchased other weapons from Argentina, Turkey and the Czech Republic, but a majority of her weapons purchases are from other Guatemalan weapons stores. Valenzuela confirmed with Emboffs that she knows the regulations governing the imports of U.S.-origin defense articles, including restrictions on re-transfer and re-export.

¶5. (SBU) El Venadito has a satisfactory record with DECAM and has passed all routine inspections without incident. According to DECAM's Director, Colonel Hector Del Cid, El Venadito is a small-scale but well managed weapons store that is operating within local laws and regulations. Based on the results of the interview and a records check with DECAM, Post recommends approval of the reftel license.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Emboff conducted separate interviews with additional satisfactory Blue Lantern licensing recipients who provided insight into the popularity of Marlin Model 60, .22 caliber gun ownership in Guatemala. Both Emboff contacts agreed that these firearms are not used for crime, but are "coveted firearms in the countryside, where people use them for hunting, and also as pest control and home defense." The contacts concluded that gun users are "craving" for them because 20 years ago, the Marlin weapons were considered a "luxury" and very difficult to purchase in Guatemala at that time.

McFarland